

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the above amendments and the following remarks, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-16, 19, and 20 are pending in this application. By this amendment, Claims 1-16 are amended; Claims 17 and 18 are canceled; and Claims 19 and 20 are added herewith. Support for the amendments can at least be found beginning on page 5, line 11 to page 6, line 30 of the specification, and in Figs. 1(b) and 3(a), for example. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added by this amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 4-18 were objected to as being in improper multiple dependent format; and Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,307,582 to Mancini.

With respect to the objection to Claims 4-18, Claims 4-16 are amended by the present amendment and Claims 17 and 18 are canceled. Withdrawal of the objection to the claims as being improper multiple dependents is respectfully requested.

With respect to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based on Mancini, that rejection is respectfully traversed. In particular, it is submitted that the applied art does not teach or suggest the elongated element passes through the opening in a first angular position, but in an angular position different from the first angular position, interference exists between a surface of the engaging portion of the connecting member and a surface of the receiving element thereby preventing the elongated element from passing through the opening, as recited in amended Claim 1.

Instead, Mancini shows in Fig. 4 a circular elongated post (14) where the only interruption in the constant circular tubular shape, is the geometrically consistent depressions on the body. Mancini discusses “a plurality of circumferentially extending depressions” (32, 34), however, the depressions are also circular in nature and are of a smaller diameter than

the diameter of the rest of the post. Mancini, col. 2, lines 47-52. Mancini also shows in Fig. 4 a similarly-sized circular opening in the clutch member, into which the post is inserted. Due to the similarly-sized circular shapes of the post and the opening in Mancini, the entire length of the circular post will fit through the circular opening on the clutch member at any angle. Since the post in Mancini will pass through the opening of the clutch member at any angular position with respect to the central axis of the post, Mancini does not discuss or show an elongated body that passes through the opening at a first angular position, but is prevented from passing at a different angular position due to interference between the elements, as recited in amended Claim 1.

In contrast, in one or more embodiments of the present invention, an engaging portion of the connecting member on the elongated element is shaped such that the engaging portion passes through the correspondingly shaped opening in a first angular position, but cannot pass through in an angular position different from the first angular position. That is, though the shape of the first portion of the connecting member and the opening are substantially similar, the elongated member must be aligned at a particular angular position in order for the shapes to align and allow passage. Please see Figs. 3(a)-3(e) and the discussion in the specification beginning on page 5, line 11 to page 6, line 30, for example.

Accordingly, the applied art does not teach or suggest all of the features of the claimed invention. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 1-3 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based on Mancini is respectfully requested.

With regard to amended independent Claim 13, Claim 13 is amended to include similar features as discussed above with respect to Claim 1 and is believed to be patentable for at least the reasons discussed above. With regard to amended Claims 4-12 and 14-16, depending from independent Claims 1 and 13, those claims have been amended and are

believed to be patentable for at least the reasons discussed with regard to the independent claims as well as for the features they recite.

New Claim 19 recites features of a ring-shaped element previously recited in canceled Claim 17. New Claim 20 further defines the shape of features recited in Claim 1 as being substantially ovular. Please see Figs. 1(b) and 3(a), for example. New Claims 19 and 20 depend from independent Claim 1 and are, therefore, believed to be patentable for at least the reasons discussed above with regard to amended Claim 1.

Consequently, for the reasons discussed in detail above, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. Therefore, a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

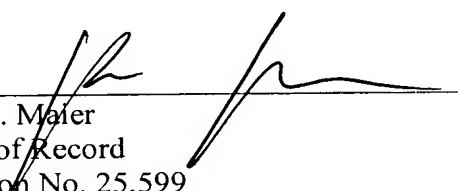
Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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